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## VII.—APHRODITE: MOTHER EARTH.

The several writers who have given consideration to the possibility that Aphrodite may have been originally an earth goddess, have treated the question in different ways. Dieterich<sup>1</sup> gives us his impression and nothing more: “. . . Aphrodite nimmt besonders leicht den Zug alter Erdgottheit in sich auf, der sie als die alles in Liebesarmung empfangende und erzeugende erscheinen lässt.” Miss J. E. Harrison<sup>2</sup> is apparently half-convinced that Aphrodite was primarily of the earth earthy, but will not be so rash as to assert it. Gruppe,<sup>3</sup> with the Iope theory uppermost in his mind, virtually ignores the problem. The fullest treatment of the subject is that presented by L. R. Farnell in his *Cults of the Greek States*,<sup>4</sup> where, after a thorough scrutiny of the evidence drawn from many sources, he reaches the conclusion that the terrestrial aspects of the goddess are the primitive ones. The validity of this judgment is in no wise impaired by a revision of Mr. Farnell's opinion as to the local source of the divinity; when he published his chapters on Aphrodite in the *Cults* (1896) he held that she was largely Oriental, whereas in his *Greece and Babylon* (1911) he maintains that she was almost entirely Aegean, but nevertheless an earth-divinity. Dr. J. Rendel Harris<sup>4a</sup> has detected the scent of the soil out of which she has been digged, but that she is originally and fundamentally the *mandragora*, or mandrake, as he maintains, I cannot believe; on the other hand, that in certain localities and secondarily she was the mandrake is undeniable.

For several years the present writer has been making a detailed study of the Aphrodite of myth and cult and has come to this same conclusion, although along a different avenue of approach. He has found Farnell's compilation of references bearing upon this phase of the goddess's nature very full, yet he notes the absence of two highly significant passages. The first

<sup>1</sup> *Mutter Erde* (1913), p. 71.

<sup>2</sup> *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion*, pp. 307-315.

<sup>3</sup> *Gr. Myth. und Religionsgesch.*, II, 1343-1375.

<sup>4</sup> II, pp. 642-653; 750-755.

<sup>4a</sup> *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* III, 4, (1917), pp. 354 ff.

is a fragment of Theopompus<sup>5</sup> preserved in Plutarch, De Is. et Os., 69, p. 378 E:

Τοὺς δὲ πρὸς ἐσπέραν οἰκοῦντας ἱστορεῖ Θεόπομπος ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ καλεῖν τὸν μὲν χειμῶνα Κρόνον, τὸ δὲ θέρος Ἀφροδίτην, τὸ δ' ἔαρ Περσεφόνην · ἐκ δὲ Κρόνου καὶ Ἀφροδίτης γεννᾶσθαι πάντα.

The second passage is a fragment of some epic poet doubtfully attributed to Parmenides:<sup>6</sup>

αὐτὰρ ὑπ' αὐτὴν ἔστιν ἀταρπιτὸς ὀκρνώεσσα  
κοίλῃ, πηλώδης · ἥ δ' ἡγήσασθαι ἀρίστη  
ἄλσος ἐς ἱμερόεν πολυτιμήτου Ἀφροδίτης.

The path thus referred to is regarded as being even lower than the underworld region occupied by Persephone. The fragment, if read in connection with the text in which it is preserved, allows no other inference than that Aphrodite was just as terrestrial as Persephone, whose nature none disputed. Indeed, the two divinities here stand in the same relation to each other as they do in the myth in which they lay their respective claims to Adonis before Zeus in Hades.<sup>7</sup> The one quotation would supplement Farnell's references 107 a-i (pp. 750-751), and the other those numbered 110 a-m (pp. 754-755). The latter, inasmuch as it includes a specific mention of Aphrodite rather than an allusion to her by means of an epithet, is of much more value as an argument than Farnell's reference 110 l.

A recent discovery,<sup>8</sup> however, brings the conclusion as to the *primaeval* nature of the goddess nearer to certainty. The French excavators have found the sacred "inner" *omphalos* of Delphi, not exactly *in situ*, but nevertheless amid the ruins of a building which there is every reason to believe was the famous *adyton*. This is to be distinguished from the "outer" *omphalos*<sup>9</sup> which came to light a score of years ago and of which Pausanias makes mention.<sup>10</sup> But the "inner" *omphalos* Pausanias, in common with most of the laity, never saw, for he makes no mention of it

<sup>5</sup> FHG I, 293, p. 328.

<sup>6</sup> Diels, *Frag. d. Vorsokr.*, Parm. 20 (dub.) = *Philosophoumena*, V, 8, ed. Cruice.

<sup>7</sup> Apollodorus, *Bibl.*, III, 14, 4 (183-185).

<sup>8</sup> Miss J. E. Harrison calls it "the greatest religious find of the century" (*The Year's Work in Classical Studies*, 1915, p. 73).

<sup>9</sup> *Bull. de Corr. Hell.*, 1900, p. 259, fig. 2.

<sup>10</sup> X, 16, 3.

in his description of the contents of the *adyton*;<sup>11</sup> if he had seen it, he could scarcely have failed to note its most striking feature, the inscription engraved upon it. This inscription consists simply of the three characters  $\Pi \wedge \epsilon$  which are at least as old as the seventh century B. C. and are interpreted as the mystic E of Delphi and the divine name ΓΑ, i. e. Earth.<sup>12</sup> The "inner" *omphalos*, then, is not merely the central point of the world or the navel of the earth; it is both of these and is also the very image of Mother Earth herself, who, according to the literature and mythology, was the primitive divinity of the Pythian sanctuary.<sup>13</sup>

This identification throws new light upon an equation of Hesychius that has been noted frequently in discussion of the *omphalos* as a religious symbol: γῆς ὀμφαλός, he says, ἡ Πάφος καὶ Δελφοί. The discovery at Delphi now enables us to see that in reality the words explained by the lexicographer should be written Γῆς ὀμφαλός. If, then, the Delphic *omphalos* is Earth's own image, the conclusion is unescapable that the Paphian *omphalos* is also. But the evidence by no means ends here. That the renowned conical *omphalos* of Paphos was regarded as an image of Aphrodite is expressly recorded by several reliable and independent authorities. Servius<sup>14</sup> tells us: Apud Cyprios Venus in modum umbilici, vel, ut quidam volunt, metae colitur. Tacitus,<sup>15</sup> in his description of the visit of Titus to the Cyprian shrine, draws the same picture: Illum [i. e. Titum] cupido incescit adeundi visendique templum Paphiae Veneris, inclytum per indigenas advenasque. . . . Simulacrum deae non effigie humana: continuus orbis latiore initio tenuem in ambitum, metae modo exurgens. Maximus of Tyre,<sup>16</sup> though employing another comparison, testifies clearly to the contour of the image:

<sup>11</sup> X, 24, 5.

<sup>12</sup> F. Courby, Comptes rend. de l'Acad. des Inscr., 1914, p. 268. For a photographic reproduction and a full description of the stone see this article.

<sup>13</sup> Aesch., Eum., 1-8; Eurip. Iph. in T., 1234 ff.; see Miss J. E. Harrison, Themis, pp. 384 ff., pp. 396 f.; Dieterich, Mutter Erde (1913), p. 60. On *omphalos* see also Miss Harrison in Quiggin, Essays and Studies Presented to William Ridgeway, pp. 150 ff.

<sup>14</sup> Ad Verg. Aen. I, 720.

<sup>15</sup> Hist. II, 2-3.

<sup>16</sup> Diss. II, vii Hobein (VIII, 8).

τὸ ἄγαλμα οὐκ ἂν εἰκάσαις ἄλλῃ τῷ ἢ πυραμίδι λευκῇ, ἣ δὲ ὅλη ἀγνοεῖται. That the *simulacrum*, though symbolical, was nevertheless held to be a real statue is clear from the narrative in which Philostratus<sup>17</sup> tells of the visit of Apollonius of Tyana to the Paphian sanctuary: νεὼς . . . ἐπιτυχόντες προσπλεύσαι Κύπρῳ κατὰ τὴν Πάφον, οὗ τὸ τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ἔδος, ὃ ξυμβολικῶς ἱδρυμένον θαυμάσαι τὸν Ἀπολλώνιον, καὶ πολλὰ τοὺς ἱερέας ἐς τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἱεροῦ διδαξάμενον ἐς Ἰωνίαν πλεύσαι . . . . .

Now it can be seen at a glance that the value of the archaeological and literary evidence depends wholly, in this connection, upon the statement of Hesychius. If the latter is true, then one is forced to regard the omphalic image of Aphrodite in the Cyprian shrine as also an image of Earth; in short, that Aphrodite is herself Earth. Moreover, there would emerge the possibility, if not the probability, that Aphrodite's name signifies 'earth,' in which event it would assuredly be non-Hellenic. If this clue can be followed to a successful conclusion scholars may be able thereby to account in detail for the multiform nature of the Greek goddess of love.

W. SHERWOOD FOX.

WESTERN UNIVERSITY, LONDON, CANADA.

<sup>17</sup> Vita Apoll., III, 58.